



Office of the People's Counsel District of Columbia

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May 1, 2007

Elizabeth A. Noël
People's Counsel

Marlene H. Dortch
Commission Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Room TW-A325
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: CC Docket No. 96-128 (Reasonable Rates for Inmate Calls)

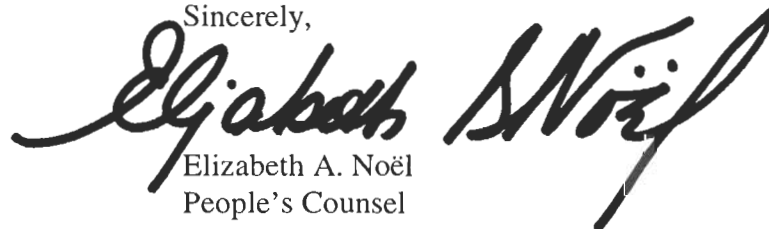
Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Office of the People's Counsel ("Office") is the statutory advocate for utility ratepayers in the District of Columbia. The Office supports the Petitioners' efforts in this proceeding to have the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") establish benchmark rates for long distance calls being made from correctional institutions. OPC submits that establishing benchmark rates for these calls is consistent with the FCC's mandate in 47 U.S.C. 201(b) to ensure that rates for interstate communications are just and reasonable. Moreover, establishing benchmark rates is consistent with the American Bar Association's recommendation adopted in 2005 that encourages rates for inmate telephone calls to be provided at the lowest possible rate.

In 2001, as a result of legislation, a majority of the District's prisoners were transferred from privately owned prison facilities to penal institutions operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons ("FBOP"). The rate of a collect long distance call made from a FBOP facility is less than \$.25 a minute. Additionally, the FBOP allows family members to deposit funds into a prisoner's account that can be used to pay for long distance calls. As a result of the transfer of prisoners in 2001 to FBOP facilities, the Office has witnessed a significant decrease in the number of complaints of high telephone bills caused by collect calls from prisons that charge an excessive rate for long distance calls.

Therefore, I encourage the FCC to exercise the breadth of its authority to ensure that long distance rates for collect calls made from prisons are just and reasonable.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth A. Noël
People's Counsel